/89 cont./

12. Hygiene

515 Regular bathing, washing of the face and hands, and cleaning the finger and toe nails are unknown; this is also true for babies, who are often covered with a veritable crust of dirt. Nor do they /90/ brush their teeth or ever rinse their mouths. Yet I [147] was never aware of an unpleasant body odor or bad breath on the [145] Indians, and until an advanced age their teeth are dazzlingly white and sound. While hunting or gathering, however, if men and women are obliged to cross a brook or small river, they gladly utilize the opportunity to take a refreshing bath, and the same is true when female members of the tribe fetch water. A bath is greatly appreciated by children and young people, but [481] not at all by older persons. Most men can swim quite well and teach their sons also; women and girls who swim are exceptions.

177 515 As a result of occasional contacts with the palm-fiber gatherers on the Rio Aracá or with the personnel of the Indian protection post on the Demini, the Surára and Pakidái have for some time been acquainted with soap, and various Indians, predominantly children and young men and women, like to lather themselves when they take a bath. Several women had even taken to washing their hammocks now and then with soap. Thus, the cakes of soap [123] that I carried with me were very much in demand, as were perfume and hair tonic.

264 Eating is done only with the hands (see p. 184). If the meat was very greasy and the hands are smeared all over with dirt and grease, they are rubbed off somewhat against a post and then run through the hair a few times. The eating bowls and pots, with the remains of the meal, are then put down for the dogs, who at the same time take over the work of cleaning; eating utensils are seldom washed. When they are needed for the next meal, the woman passes them over her hair a few times. If there are still a few crusts of dirt present, she spits on them and rubs them with her hand.

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema
Ma Kiri'tare SS20

IV

Had Luis Antonio been wearing clothes, we should have pronounced him very well turned out, for he looked dark and perfectly groomed in his nudity, which was enhanced in very smart fashion by a loincloth of fiery red and a ruffle of white feathers on his right arm. In addition to his name and his knowledge of Spanish there was one other thing about him that suggested that his story might not be quite the usual one: his rotten teeth. All the Indian peoples have teeth that are very strong and brilliantly white. They are used to hard exertions on the meat the savage eats, while his fruits provide the necessary minerals, and keep their strength and colour well into old age. Luis Antonio was an exception—his teeth were no longer good: there was a long history to them, and we soon got to know it.

Uarema—Uarma, Ualema, Uadma, or Uadema were alternative forms, all very close in the Shirian pronunciation—had been a Guayca boy from the Uagna tribe. They were real warriors, forever at war with the Samatari on the other side of the cordillera. Battles were a regular feature of tribal life. When the arsenal of long-range weapons had been exhausted the armies would come to grips with clubs and sticks. During one such engagement the young Uarema disappeared into the forest and, finding himself lost, stayed all alone on the bank of the Merevari, living on fruit and worms. At the time he was probably no more than four or five years old, but the Guayca Indians are savages among the savages, and four or five is old enough for a boy to know what is good to eat in the forest and what isn't; where to find it; and how to catch it. While he was all by himself on a beach, getting a few little fish by striking at them with a stick, a Makiritari party came along, found him there, and took him with them. They were going down the Caura to sell canoes to the people on the rubber plantations at Maripa (which is almost on the Orinoco). The child, travelling with them, soon accustomed himself to their language and their Cassava bread.

At Maripa, one Martin Viudo, a rubber man who knew Guiana like the palm of his hand, saw the boy and prodded him as you would prod a spring chicken or a sucking-pig in a shop.

'A fine boy this,' he declared. 'But wicked. Wicked and obstinate, like all

11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

fidelity. Many men, however, show their ferocity by meting out serious punishment to their wives for even minor offenses. It is not uncommon for a man to injure his errant wife seriously; and some men have even killed wives.

Women expect this kind of treatment and many of them measure their husband's concern in terms of the frequency of minor beatings they sustain. I overheard two young women discussing each other's scalp scars. One of them commented that the other's husband must really care for her since he has beaten her on the head so frequently!

A woman usually depends for protection on her brothers, who will defend her against a cruel husband. If a man is too brutal to a wife, her brothers may take the woman away from him and give her to another man. It is largely for this reason that women abhor the possibility of being married off to men in distant villages; they know that their brothers cannot protect them under these circumstances. Women who have married a male cross-cousin have an easier life, for they are related to their husbands by cognatic ties of kinship as well as by marriage. Kąobawä, for example, is related to Bahimi as FaSiSo, and their marital relationship is very tranquil by Yąnomamö standards. He does beat Bahimi on occasion, but never cruelly. It is considered good to beat a wife every once in a while just to show your concern for her.

A young man in Monou-teri shot and killed his wife a few years before I conducted my fieldwork. Even while I was there, a man in one of the villages shot his wife in the stomach with a barbed arrow. Considerable internal injury resulted when the arrow was removed. The missionaries had her sent out by airplane to the Territorial capital for surgery. Her wound had gotten infected, and the girl was near death by the time the incident came to their attention. Another man chopped his wife on the arm with a machete; the missionaries in that village feared that the woman would lose the use of her hand because some of the tendons to her fingers were severed. A fight involving a case of infidelity took place in one of the villages just before I left the field. The male culprit was killed in the club fight, and the recalcitrant wife had both her ears cut off by her enraged husband. A number of other women had their ears badly mutilated by angry husbands. The women wear sticks of cane in their pierced ear lobes; these are easily grabbed by the husband. A few men jerked these so hard that they tore their wives' ear lobes open.

It is not difficult to understand, then, why Yąnomamö women in general have such a vindictive and caustic attitude toward the external world. By the time a woman is thirty years old she has "lost her shape" and has developed a rather unpleasant disposition. Women tend to seek refuge and consolation in each other's company, sharing their misery with their peers.

A woman gains a measure of respect when she becomes old. By then she has adult children who care for her and treat her kindly. Old women also have a unique position in the world of intervillage warfare and politics. They are immune from the incursions of raiders and can go from one village to another with complete disregard for personal danger. In this connection they are employed as messengers and, on some occasions, as the recoverers of bodies. If a man is killed near the village of an enemy, an old woman from the slain man's village is permitted to recover his body.

Still, the women have one method by which they can exercise a measure of influence over village politics. All women fear being abducted by raiders and always leave the village with this anxiety at the back of their minds. Women always bring their